

January 17, 2011

To: The Senate Local Government Committee

Senator Jon Sonju, Chair

Senator Art Wittich, Vice Chair

Senator Steven Gallus

Senator Bruce Tutvedt

Senator Edward Buttrey

Senator Shannon Augare

Senator Lynda Moss

Senator Gene Buckovich

Senator Alan Olson

Chairman Sonju, Committee Members -

Good afternoon. My name is Judy Woolley and I'm from Plains, Sanders County. I've made the effort to attend today's hearing to state my support for SB117 and to ask, respectfully, that you support it, also.

The reasons I believe the Montana Coordination Act of 2011 is important to the future of the people of Montana are many but I will focus on two points.

The first one involves a little history. My husband and I moved to Plains in 1981 purchasing some wooded acreage north of town. Some of the trees were regenerating after a fire in 1969, some were decadent and dieing, and there was a smattering of healthy trees. The timber had been heavily harvested in the '20s we were told and had been left untouched since then.

We immediately enrolled in the Montana Tree Farm System, took every opportunity to become educated in timber and land management and have been working now for nearly 30 years to produce good, quality, sustainable timber. We take pride in our accomplishments on our property and now have a healthy, diverse stand that will soon be ready for another harvest.

When we moved to Plains, there were five lumber mills in existence in Sanders County. There remains one today.

With those shutdowns comes, obviously, the drop in timber production, the significant reduction of jobs in the forests, the need for all that equipment that so many families worked hard to acquire and paid taxes and fees on, the knowledge necessary to safely work in the woods and to maintain equipment, the camaraderie of logging families, the pride in our area. And that's not mentioning the resulting significant reduction in the tax base, money for schools, money to live on.

I believe that coordination between the federal and local governments could go a long way in, once again, building up the timber industry. I cannot for the life of me understand why so-called "environmental groups" think it's just fine to have timber shipped in from Canada, Norway and Russia instead of putting our good people to work in our own land. We all love our wood products and they should be produced here at home.

So there might be some selfishness in wanting to see SB117 pass - after all the labor and decisions that have gone into making our property what it is today, we'd like to have a market available to us for our product.

On to the second point I'd like to make. Over the past 15 or so years, we've heard numerous individuals and groups state that "if this law (fill in the blank) would save even one life then it will be worthwhile." Here's your chance to fulfill that great desire. SB117 could save the lives of numerous families and whole communities if passed.

Again, I respectfully encourage you to see that SB117 comes to fruition without changes or amendments attached.

Thank you.

Judy Woolley, 424 High Country Road, Plains, MT 59859

